

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

PREPARING WOMEN FOR STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ROLES IN THE ARMY

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this paper is to examine why women are under represented in strategic leadership roles in the Army and how this limits their ability to mentor, coach and serve as role models. Although the National Defense Authorization Act opened duty positions for women, it limits access to positions that make women eligible to serve as strategic leaders. This project addresses some of the factors of why there are so few female officers in strategic leadership positions and the need for increased diversity in the future force. It examines how the Army defines strategic leadership and looks at three methods to expand these capabilities. The methods are: reducing obstacles to promotion, assessing leader performance, and expanding existing programs such as mentoring and education. The conclusion offers recommendations to further prepare women for strategic leadership.

Women make up a large portion of the work force and play significant roles in nurturing and developing leaders though few are strategic leaders. Preparing women to serve as strategic leaders helps ensure that the best-qualified personnel establish future policies and oversee programs. This is especially important with the growing number of females serving in the Army and their expanding roles. Women are sometimes overlooked in studies pertaining to transformation because the majority of females are not in the combat arms. Allowing women to contribute to their highest potential will continue to enrich the Army and provide the critical resources required for transformation and future challenges.



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## PREPARING WOMEN FOR STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP IN THE ARMY

### BACKGROUND

“...history associates men with the public sphere of paid work, or production, and women with the private sphere of nonpaid work, or reproduction. Whether by consigning them to ‘female’ jobs or fighting their access to ‘male’ jobs, women have been confronted with challenges to their ‘right’ to participate in the labor force on an equal basis with men. Nowhere does this issue seem to generate as much debate as in the military”.<sup>1</sup>

American women have been serving in the military since the Revolutionary War. Women’s roles are expanding, but very few become strategic leaders. The Army fully integrated women into the force in 1974 when the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (WAC) inactivated to help fill critical force shortfalls. In 1993, the National Defense Authorization Acts opened up over ninety percent of military occupations to women. The positions closed to women are combat leadership positions.<sup>2</sup> Under the Combat Exclusion Law, women are not allowed to serve in units that have high probability of direct enemy combat.<sup>3</sup> These policies discriminate against women because personnel who serve in combat units such as the Infantry, Armor, and Artillery make up a large part of the Army and are promoted at a much higher rate.

Despite the laws excluding women from direct combat, most duty positions such as logistics, engineering, and military police are likely to place women in hostile zones during a conflict. Current day global wars subject everyone to direct contact with the enemy regardless of position. Women must be prepared to perform their missions under hostile fire. Although many women are contributing great service to the military less than 7 percent make it to the grade of Colonel compared to over 25 percent for men.<sup>4</sup> The higher ranks such as Colonel, are where Army Officers become strategic leaders, mentors and role models; exerting great influence for the future force. There are very few women in these positions that can help affect current and future policies and environments for change. The outlook for the future of women promoted to senior ranks in the Army based on current promotions is improving very slowly.

The Army traditionally selects strategic leaders that have combat experience. Because women are excluded from combat leadership positions, they are relegated to lesser combat support roles. This causes some women to lose confidence that they will be able to compete with their male counterparts for strategic leadership positions and they choose other career fields outside of the military. The shortfall of women in strategic leadership positions such as the Army’s major commands limits the role models for the growing number of women serving throughout the Army. The future labor force will be comprised on 48% women by 2025 and the



number of college-educated women is already higher than men.<sup>5</sup> In order for the Army to retain a quality force structure, it is imperative that women be able to compete for senior leadership positions. It is also important for women to have their issues and concerns represented at the senior level.

The United States Army has had difficulty recruiting a sufficient number of qualified men in certain technical specialties. Women who are better qualified with higher education have compensated for some of this shortfall, however their limited experience in combat units inhibits their ability to move up the ranks.<sup>6</sup> Although the Army's policy is that women should not be exposed to direct combat, women have died in every war from combat. The Army needs to find creative approaches to achieve role equity to promote a dynamic force structure that provides opportunities for all members while transforming and retaining the best talent possible.

The purpose of this paper is to describe what the Army can do to retain quality women in the service and prepare them for strategic leadership positions. It examines what the Army expects of strategic leaders, methods to improve promotion systems, skills development and reducing obstacles to advancement. These methods are examples of techniques that come from personal experiences from female strategic leaders in the military, industry, and academia. This assessment concludes with some analysis and recommendations to better prepare women to serve as future strategic leaders. These recommendations are for women, supervisors and policy makers who are all shaping the environment for those who will build on our experience.

## **FUTURE MILITARY STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAITS**

The Army is undergoing transformation that significantly changes the way it prepares for and fights future wars. These transformational changes are focusing on combat systems and organizations but do not always specify how women will be integrated into the force. Although many units are open to females, few leaders and organizations have experience in the combat environment. Operational units will undergo restructuring in the next ten years to create highly mobile and lethal forces. It is essential future strategic leaders are armed with the best skills and attributes to work through this complex change processes. Women with combat experience need to be involved in the decision making process that develops these new transformed organizations. This will ensure that the Army keeps females engaged at the lowest levels that are requisite to building strategic leadership skills.

The Army defines strategic leadership in many ways because of the diversity of the Army mission and the size of the institution. Field Manual 22-100, entitled Army Leadership describes Army strategic leadership traits as follows.<sup>7</sup>

- Strategic Army leaders sustain the Army's culture, envision the future, convey vision to a wide audience, lead change, and to deal with volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. Strategic leaders must adapt their interpersonal, conceptual and technical skills to rapidly changing conditions. Conceptual skills include the ability to reason well, envision, develop frames of reference; and deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. Technical skills formulate and coordinate concepts despite change, apply strategic art and leverage technology to forecast future requirements.

Women excel with interpersonal skills that include the ability to build consensus, be a personal example, develop and motivate subordinates, negotiate, build staffs and conduct effective communications. The Army education process helps its members to develop conceptual and technical skills and practical experience through maneuver training exercises. Women are sometimes excluded from maneuver training exercises since they cannot be assigned to combat units. These skills are crucial for both men and women to serve as strategic leaders and maintain command authority over subordinates.

The authority to commit subordinate lives or to put them in harms way is based on command authority. Command authority is delegated from the President to a specially selected group of leaders called Commanders.<sup>8</sup> Commanders are selected based on their demonstrated superior tactical and operational experience and their potential for future service. The Army develops strategic leaders through command, education, and mentoring programs. Although the combat exclusion law does not prohibit women from gaining valuable command experience, it limits their operational experience to less prominent commands.

Most strategic leaders have command authority and influence the policies and procedures that affect promotions and career opportunities for their subordinates. Strategic leaders are deciding how to transform the force and very few senior military leaders have experience working with professional women.<sup>9</sup> This experience is vital to strategic leaders in selecting and developing personnel for various missions and continued leadership. The Army's strategic leadership is built on command experience and authority that is selected by former commanders. Senior leaders tend to select their replacements from those who resemble their leadership attributes and this perpetuates a narrow demographic population of leaders. The Army has some excellent programs to promote and educate the force about the history of women in military service but has limited opportunities to put this knowledge to work.

Nearly 80 percent of executive's development is on the job experience that develops management vice leadership skills.<sup>10</sup> The difference is that managers have know how where

leaders develop vision and intent. Future leaders have to be three-dimensional with individual skills in business, leadership, and personal effectiveness. The business dimension includes what challenges we will face in the future. The leadership dimension focuses on builds on developing competence and character from classical study and experience. The personal dimension is the way we integrate our values and purpose for continuous learning and development.<sup>11</sup>

The three dimensional framework recognizes that most people only use a fraction of their potential to lead and our future Army requires a wide range of leadership attributes. A combination of qualities from both men and women will create a synergistic affect that will give us the competitive edge if we encourage our leaders to utilize all of our leadership resources. Future strategic leaders will operate under different organizational structures and procedures that are evolving with changing priorities and working environments. Women have a huge stake in future organizations and the environment since they make up a significant part of the population. A larger number of women in strategic leader positions are essential for females to have impact in how these future systems are designed and allocated.

Future strategic leaders need to serve as facilitators, appraisers, forecasters, advisers, and enablers.<sup>12</sup> Women are adept in most of these areas from performing these skills to work their way into leadership roles. Organizations no longer function in autocratic fashion where the top leadership tells the lower levels how to perform their mission. Layers of hierarchy are being eliminated as we find more efficient ways to accomplish tasks. In the new marketplace workers are developing their skills for future opportunities. The Army needs the best and the brightest to invest their skills for future leadership. Workers are looking to leadership for quick answers and guidance and when they do not get what they want they loose trust and confidence. Workers want more say in how systems are run especially the ones that affect them. This is especially true for the large number of women who work in lower ranking positions.

Future Army strategic leaders need a superior level of education to keep up with rapid change and the capacity to work in several languages.<sup>13</sup> Military women face challenges in developing skills in other cultures since some countries such as Middle Eastern nations do not support women in the workforce like the United States. Nonetheless, current military operations throughout the world are providing women the opportunity to manage large and diverse staffs and administer complex budgets. Although women might not have the same access in male dominated cultures, operational experience in the same geographic area provides credible assurance of women's competencies in the same environments to their counterparts.

## **DEVELOPING STRATEGIC WOMEN LEADERS**

There are many ways to prepare women for strategic leadership in the Army and this paper examines three methods. These methods are: reduce obstacles to advancement; provide leadership assessment tools; promote mentoring and education to increase strategic leadership opportunities for women. This paper examines these methods and incorporates this information in the conclusion and recommendations for suggested future improvements.

## **OBSTACLES TO ADVANCEMENT**

Three of the prominent obstacles to women's careers in the Army are the challenge to balance work with family responsibilities, prejudice, gender integration, and harassment. The growing population of women and dual service couples with children as well as single parents create unique challenges for the military. Women typically take on the majority of the responsibilities for family care that limits their ability to balance their careers and families. One of the greatest challenges for military leaders is how to help care for families around frequent travel and deployments. In the past, most military families were predominately traditional where the majority of male service members were married to non-working spouses, but this trend is changing. The change is slow and will take several generations to impact the entire force especially since there are more dual career soldiers, single parents and women in the Army.

## **WORK AND FAMILY**

The large number of junior officers leaving military service also is leading the Army to look at factors that affect family life.<sup>14</sup> Two years ago, the Army senior leadership directed a study to determine how to support officers throughout their career to help with retention. Balancing career and family requirements was a top concern in the Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study (ATLDP).<sup>15</sup> As a result of the study, strategic leaders have started to learn and talk about the factors to balance career requirements with family. An example of this effort is the new policy for service members with high school seniors to stabilize in their assignments to complete high school. Interestingly, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel statistics indicate that ninety percent of Army male officers in senior ranks have children, but none of the women promoted to general officer had children.<sup>16</sup>

There are very few support networks for women in units because of the small numbers of women assigned to each unit and there is even less support for male military spouses. Some women view these conditions as prejudicial but there are other forms of prejudice that are obstacles to women furthering their careers such as full acceptance of women in the Army. The

lack of full acceptance is linked to the fact the Army fully integrated women in 1974 and many of the strategic leaders entered the service when the genders were segregated. The American workforce was also integrating more women in the workforce in the 1970s and most men from this generation have little experience in working with women outside traditional family roles. American society is also inconsistent in the way it views working women and mixed messages are sent to our youth about their changing roles.

## DISCRIMINATION AND BIAS

Attrition of women in the military has been attributed partly to their inability to overcome prejudice and gain acceptance in their profession. Women and minorities have the highest levels of turnover in most professions because many perceive limited opportunities for advancement.<sup>17</sup> Bias develops in situations where leaders state or imply that minorities do not have the attributes or are unsuited for senior leadership. Leaders may use these stereotypes as criteria to evaluate leadership potential for future assignments. Stereotypes can get in the way of making promotion decisions based on merit or ability.<sup>18</sup> Lack of unit discipline, attitude and tolerance of leaders for new ideas are other ways to evaluate the extent of prejudice.

Organizations often classify individuals as either dominants or as tokens that results in leadership bias. Groups considered “skewed” have a majority to minority ratio of 85 to 15.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the current ratio of men to women in the Army is 85 to 15. The predominant members in skewed groups are called “dominants” because they control the group and its culture. The minority members are called “tokens” because they are treated as representatives of their group. Tokens face additional performance pressure because they are constantly being evaluated. They are misperceived because of the dominant’s tendency to stereotype them and are often excluded from information networks.<sup>20</sup> The few women that attain senior ranks often experience tokenism, but some leave organizations unless the effort is made to integrate them. The Army misses out in utilizing their experience and ability to coach and mentor future leaders.

## GENDER INTEGRATION

It is important to consider how the other services are working through leader retention and what attracts people, especially women to the military. A 1997 RAND study found that gender integration is perceived to have a small effect on readiness, cohesion, and morale. Most service personnel prefer gender integrated training and leadership. Gender integration has an overwhelming influence on unit morale and cohesion.<sup>21</sup> The small number of women in senior leadership positions negates the good news about gender integration. As a result, women in

the military do not get much exposure to female role models. They have a hard time envisioning their ability to rise to strategic leader positions and look for other professions to promote their career advancement.

The Army is one of the last organizations to integrate women and this is one of the reasons there are such low numbers of females in strategic leadership positions. Although the Army is making great strides since women were integrated into the service in 1974, the progress is slow because of the small number of women in the service. The Army conducts studies to evaluate this integration and often uses this information to try to improve systems to make integration more successful. The following conditions are promoting positive attitudes and effective integration of women.<sup>22</sup>

- Interaction is close and sustained so the majority get to know the minority
- The minority group members are at least equal status to the majority group members
- The minority group members make up more than a small or token part of the group
- There are commonly shared goals in the group
- The conditions promote cooperation more than competition in the group
- The social norms support equality, justice and integration
- Those in positions of authority support the integration

Other obstacles to women achieving strategic leadership positions are opponents to women in the military. In his book "The Weak Link", Mr. Brian Mitchell argues that because women are smaller and not as strong they are more likely to suffer emotional distress. He believes that women are rights-oriented and pacifistic, which forces out discipline and erodes the spirit of combativeness, aggressiveness, a willingness to die or the courage to kill.<sup>23</sup> His premise does not take into account that women no longer are able to pick where and when they will confront the enemy. Women need to be prepared to fight anywhere at anytime. Although women are oriented more to peacemaking roles, their skills and strong ethical standards for justice supports the same national values as men. New roles and experiences for women are developing new skills that make gender less prominent in decision making and strategic leadership. It is important for strategic leaders to develop attributes that serve more diverse populations because of the changing demographics. Overcoming gender integration obstacles helps reduce other obstacles such as sexual harassment.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Increasing the number of women in strategic leadership positions aids in combating sexual harassment because they help educate organizations in prevention techniques. Unfortunately Major General Claudia Kennedy, the highest ranking women officer in the Army, was subjected to sexual harassment.<sup>24</sup> Despite her success throughout her career, her case resulted in mistrust and backlash for women in the service. Women view sexist behavior such as making offensive sexist remarks and putting women down because of their sex as the most negative form of sexual harassment.<sup>25</sup>

Strategic leaders recognize the opportunities and benefits of diversity that brings new ways to think and work with systems. We all have to be willing to have respect for differences and women demonstrate understanding and sensitivity well since they are often treated, as they are minorities. Strategic leaders must bring people with diverse backgrounds and interests together to provide opportunities for them to produce their best work and realize their potential.<sup>26</sup> Evaluating these opportunities to determine what systems are most effective is essential to allocating scarce resources effectively and developing a force that adapts to change. New scenarios and resources will bring more opportunities for strategic leaders to ensure future leaders have the resources and tools for transformation.

## PROVIDE LEADER ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Factors that influence the process of selecting personnel for career enhancing positions includes the visibility senior leaders have of duty performance and their evaluation of potential for future service. Frequent communications between the senior leader and subordinate are critical to success. These relationships establish the conditions for mentoring and developmental opportunities that promote future advancement.<sup>27</sup> This is especially important for minorities in the top levels of organizations because they rarely get feedback.<sup>28</sup> The 360-degree feedback, and single identity programs are some of the programs to assess leader development. Both tools provide future strategic leaders with invaluable feedback on performance and offer recommendations for improvement. The potentially embarrassing information that produces real change is forthcoming in organizations where people have genuine trust, commitment and shared responsibility.<sup>29</sup>

The 360-degree feedback instruments allow individuals to compare their self-ratings to those of their bosses, peers and subordinates. This is particularly important to women since they get less feedback than their male counterparts.<sup>30</sup> These instruments show how women enable others, approach projects holistically and empower others. Women do well encouraging

individual accountability and delegating authority that enables their subordinates to take ownership and initiative to fix problems. It also helps them fit in and compliment the way the majority of the group works through issues. Leaders should have access to the 360-feedback tool early in their career to evaluate their progress through leadership assignments in preparation for strategic leadership.

Senior leaders must manage competition in a way that it preserves the integrity of organizational relationships while supporting career advancement of both sexes.<sup>31</sup> Besides having excellent self- knowledge, strategic leaders need to know about the majority culture so they can work within this structure to bring about change. Strategic leaders help link people who have similar interests in organizations and serve as mentors to provide subordinates insights on organizational politics. Women have to work hard to integrate their ideas into the organization and network with their counterparts to avoid being stereotyped and to promote their insights. Some women turn to single identity groups to develop their ideas, reinforce their strengths and gain confidence in their work.

Single identity feedback is another form of assessment that evaluates leaders by members of the same gender. Single identity feedback programs offer participants the opportunity to validate their experiences without bias caused by male/female competition. A second benefit is that this process provides a safe, supportive experience. This allows participants to work through difficult experiences without scrutiny that could not be discussed in a mixed group. Single-identity groups such as professional women's organizations provide feedback from others who work through the same issues. Same gender programs offer a safe source of support and a place to try out ideas. Female programs have the shortfall that leaders need to be able to deal with results and reactions in the male dominated leadership world. Women bring unique new ideas to problem solving which help expand their frame of reference. Women with the ability to adapt ideas from the single identity program into the mainstream are successful in achieving their goals.

Women that are "firsts" in their organizations are more likely scrutinized for mistakes and held to a higher performance standard. Single group programs allow women to take risks, ask questions, make mistakes and express feelings without being scrutinized or labeled. Self-identity programs are also nurturing and supportive for genders that are often isolated in their organizations. They learn solutions that have worked for others and how to share information and network to get additional resources.<sup>32</sup> Single-identity programs are controversial because they may inadvertently develop stereotypical responses in men such as traditional roles for



women in providing support. Leader development programs should mirror our work environment and include key skills for future personal growth such as mentoring and education.

## **MENTORING**

Mentoring is a formal or informal process to develop relationships instrumental to teaching and developing strategic leaders.<sup>33</sup> The Army encourages informal mentoring programs as part of the annual personnel evaluation system. Mentoring helps subordinates understand and refine their leadership responsibilities. It also promotes organizational values and the network of professionals that is vital to the constant change and ongoing transformation of the Army.

Current research by the United States Military Academy (USMA) is focusing on the roles and responsibilities of both the mentor and those being mentored. The USMA study shows a positive correlation of mentoring to professional development, while success is tied to initiative and experience to promote the relationship. Leaders have to continuously make a special effort to develop mentoring skills and develop these special relationships as part of the mentoring process. Unfortunately, women do not always get the full benefit of mentoring because many military males do not have experience working with women, particularly those that come from combat units. These mentoring skills are vital to minorities who have limited access to networks and sources that promote the organizational culture.

Furthermore, not all men feel comfortable in developing the same kinds of mentoring relationships with women. Opportunities for mentoring are limited to those senior officers who are comfortable in counseling and coaching women. Very few senior officers have ever worked with women or for women because of the demographics of the Army. Few male officers know how to discuss career options for females or have experience in working issues such as balancing their roles as the primary caregivers for family members. There is also a severe shortage of senior women leaders to help mentor young officers and to develop policies that support women. Strategic leaders who have had a mentor are better educated, advance more rapidly and are more likely to assume the mentor role for others.<sup>34</sup> Many military organizations are evaluating how to implement mentoring programs.

Organizations generally approach mentoring programs in either a formal or informal way. Formal mentoring programs such as the Evaluation Reports focus on satisfying organizational rather than individual goals. The pairing of mentor and protégé in formal mentoring programs is accomplished with clear time lines on obtaining organizational goals. Several companies have implemented programs that tie compensation with the promotion of women and minorities to senior level positions.<sup>35</sup> Expanding the number for women in strategic leadership positions

and teaching men how to mentor women is essential to developing future women strategic leaders in the Army. Some of the most progressive organizations support mentoring relationships by developing interpersonal skills and by rewarding those who invest in developing others.<sup>36</sup>

Interpersonal relationships are a critical part of successful mentoring programs because they help develop trust and confidence in performance and behavior. Relationships are instrumental to the way that men and women are assimilated into organizations and their ability to get their ideas adopted. Both men and women tend to perform tasks to a higher standard of performance if they feel they are part of the organization and their ideas are respected and valued. Relationships are also especially important for women's mental and physical health.<sup>37</sup> Women rely on social networks and feedback to develop skills and their esteem. The ability to build relationships has a synergistic effect to the organization and the people we interact with each day because we build knowledge from experience. Knowledge and education are other proficiencies strategic leaders seek in building better organizations.

## **EDUCATION**

Military officer education is divided into three phases: company grade, field grade and senior leader service schools. Nearly all officers are selected for military education through the company grade ranks. Selection for the Command and General Staff College is the first major cut of the officer corps that provides these officers an advantage for senior and strategic leadership opportunities. Only the top half of the officer corps is selected for this schooling and the selection is tied to performance in operational units. Although more women are gaining this type of experience, there is still a big gap in the percentage of men and women selected for this school. The Army is starting to expand this educational opportunity for all field grade officers in 2005 and will provide more opportunities for women.

Selection for the Command and General Staff College results in qualifying assignments such as battalion and brigade command that prepare officers for strategic level leadership positions. It is also one of the few opportunities for officers to interact with their peers for an extended period of time. It is important for women to get exposure to combat arms officer mentality since the majority of strategic leaders are male. Successful battalion commanders are selected for the Senior Service College and potentially brigade command or other assignments that prepare them for strategic leadership roles.

There are methods of education that also promote strategic leadership such as small group instruction, seminars and forums. Small group instruction, seminars and forums promote

individual learning and promote collaboration. These valuable educational opportunities help bring together men and women who have varied experiences and promote appreciation for insights and experiences. All leaders need to constantly grow as intellectuals and absorb and use information to stay on top of the rapidly changing global issues.<sup>38</sup> Discussion opportunities offer an added benefit of networking and opportunity for follow up support, while building credibility for ideas. Women that are credible and capable are better accepted in organizations and effective in bringing about change.

Academia is providing women more opportunities for promotion because it helps expand individual technical competencies, organizational expertise and exposure to research in strategic fields of study. American women are successful in diplomacy, defending human rights, law and the media in part because of growing educational opportunities. Education helps build self esteem and confidence to consistently exceed expectations. Academia also provides another source of mentors and a support network.<sup>39</sup>

Credible leaders are those having the education, values and competencies to build trust and commitment from their subordinates. Women leaders often try to be like males they admire and they find that those leadership styles do not work. Our personal lives give us credibility by living what we espouse. Leaders engender personal credibility and create organizational capability in their consistency to balance work with their lives outside of work. They turn aspirations into action through organizational and personal assessments, articulating the mission and vision, allocating resources to build and shape organizations, attention to priorities and accountability for our actions.<sup>40</sup>

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Developing and promoting the best strategic leaders is critical to ensuring the success of our military and security for the nation and the world. Strategic leaders need to represent the people they lead to provide role models for our diverse force. Women comprise over 15% of the force and this population will continue to grow. Senior female role models are essential to help grow future leaders. Women need to have operational experience and be integrated into these units to remain competitive for the top strategic positions. They need to pursue additional education, evaluation tools and mentoring opportunities in operational assignments to acquire the knowledge base requisite for the higher command and staff positions.<sup>41</sup> Women also need to pursue command opportunities and networks that will ensure they gain experience that are comparable to their male counterparts. These experiences and competencies help reinforce

that females have the capabilities and leadership to solve volatile, complex, uncertain and ambiguous issues related to warfare.

Senior leadership that conducts promotion and command selection boards value operational experience in combat units above education for potential in promotion. To promote credibility with their male counterparts, women must pursue operational experience in units that support combat. This experience provides interface with operational senior leaders to develop a rapport, trust and confidence in their abilities. It is also essential for women to be eligible for educational and mentoring opportunities that prepare them for increased responsibilities. Higher education expands the network and exposure to a wide range of technical subjects, policies and experts. These assets build the breadth of experience and knowledge requisite for strategic leadership. The combination of education and operational experience promotes competency and credibility that is essential for finding new and better ways to transform our Army.

The military needs to acquire lessons learned from women in senior leadership in the business world to help improve military programs. As the growth rate of women-owned businesses triple that of all American firms, more women will pursue strategic leadership positions based on their experience. Military transformation is an opportunity to help expand the roles of women. Changes to policies allowing women access to these jobs are required. As additional strategic level positions open to women, the Army needs to continue education, mentoring and evaluation programs to develop and promote our leaders. The systems to provide education, mentoring and evaluation programs in the Army are in place but need to be expanded. In some cases women have not had the opportunity to serve in these programs such as fellowships and nominative positions.

Mentoring, self-assessment tools and personnel networks enable women to prepare for operational assignments. Senior leaders need to have confidence with their peers and subordinates that come with experience working through difficult problems and issues. Women must be granted strategic level assignments based on their qualifications and abilities. Providing career guidance and support is imperative throughout a career in matching skills with positions for continued growth and development of critical skills. It is essential that women have access to senior leaders who can advise them to develop leadership skills. Military women need mentors who will provide a critical look at their work to ensure continuous improvement and keep them networked in the male dominated culture.

Formal education such as military leadership courses along with operational assignments and specific periodic reviews of duty performance is imperative to preparing future leaders to systems and resources. Expanding the use of evaluation tools like the 360-degree feedback

report will provide specific and measurable objectives. One of the most effective ways to promote women as strategic leaders is to provide opportunities for them to interact with key leadership in the organization. Male dominated professions tend to look for experience and interaction that they can measure such as field exercises and sporting events. Women bring consensus building skills and unique strategies to problem solving that provide a learning environment and promote creativity. These attributes usually do not challenge the culture or positions male counterparts set as the ground truth for problem solving.

Women may not have the same diversity of military experience as their male counterparts however, they can compensate for these skills with leadership experience and training. Military attributes are similar to what business and government organizations expect from their leadership with two important exceptions. Very few organizations require their leaders to commit the lives of their subordinates in defense of the nation or exclude women. American society is gradually coming to accept that military women are at risk of being directly involved in combat. The Army has an obligation to prepare and resource them to perform their duties to the best of their ability. Our country continues to expand the deployments and exposure of women to dangerous experiences. The casualties attributed to this risk will cause policy leaders to reconsider policies concerning women in close proximity to combat. The changing nature of warfare is also increasing the exposure of noncombatants to the effects of war. Strategic leaders have the responsibility to prepare our nation for the impacts of war.

It is imperative to protect the progress made to by women to date by anticipating transformational changes and not to close out future opportunities. Senior leadership also needs to protect against putting women in strategic positions and causing them to fail. Gradual assimilation and integration of women into strategic leadership positions will help offset the anxiety and unfamiliarity in male dominated organizations. Utilizing positive examples and role models also incorporates the values and benefits in promoting women to senior levels. There is a gap between Army policies and prevailing public attitudes about diversity in the force structure and effective strategic leadership. The Army needs to continue to revise policies to reduce bias and discrimination especially at the strategic leadership level to gain the force structure that is needed to fight and win future wars.

The complex nature of future Army operational requirements requires that senior leadership promote our best leaders and an environment that values continuous learning. Our nation needs every available asset to plan and execute complex war plans and the after effects. The Army is only using a small percentage of women to perform these important tasks and has very few women in strategic leadership positions to help develop policies for future force

requirements. Those in positions of authority have tremendous influence in developing future female strategic leaders and have the responsibility to provide resources to support women. When leaders communicate a commitment to developing women, they leverage diversity and constrained resources to improve the effectiveness of the military.

The Army cannot rely solely on technological superiority to achieve dominance because rapid change in technology makes today's cutting edge systems obsolete in the future. Our service strength comes from individuals and our ability to develop their leadership skills. Increasing the number of women as strategic leaders results in developing a balanced force that promotes equitable treatment and the value of diversity. These conditions create an environment for change where females can contribute their skills and provide a source of competitive advantage for future warfare. Future warfare requires that we use every available resource to contend with the diverse requirements and needs of the force and populations that are affected by war.



WORD COUNT =6,093



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>3</sup> Rosemarie Skaine, "Women at War", Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Publishers, 1999, 89.

<sup>4</sup> Kristi G. Ellefson, 'Advancing Army Women as Senior Leaders-Understanding the Obstacles'" 20 January 1998, Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA (28 January 1998), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins, "The Future of the Army Profession", Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill Primis Custom Publishing, 2002, 506.

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<sup>7</sup> Field Manual 22-100, Army Leadership, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 31 August 1999

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<sup>10</sup> James F. Bolt, "Developing Three-Dimensional Leaders", and The Leader of the Future, Josey-Bass Publishers, and San Francisco: CA, 1996, p. 166.

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<sup>19</sup> Ellefson, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Karen S. Lyness and Donna E. Thompson, "Above the Glass Ceiling? A Comparison of Matched Samples of Female and Male Executives," Applied Psychology 82, no.3, (1997): 361.

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<sup>23</sup> Brian Mitchell, "Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military", Regency Gateway, Washington, D.C., p 85.

<sup>24</sup> Claudia Kennedy, "Generally Speaking", Warner Books, New York, NY, 2001, p.5.

<sup>25</sup> Snider and Watkins, 511.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p 79.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 317.

<sup>28</sup> McCauley, 302.

<sup>29</sup> Peter M. Senge, "Leading Learning Organizations", The Leader of the Future, Josey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA, 1996, p44.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 303.

<sup>31</sup> Kathy E. Kram and Douglas T. Hall, "Mentoring as an Antidote to Stress During Corporate Trauma, " Human Resource Management 28 (Winter 1989): 494.

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<sup>33</sup> Colonel Thomas Kolditz, "Professional Relations: Fostering Self-Directed Development", briefing slides with scripted commentary, Carlisle Barracks, U.S. Army War College, 15 August 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Beth A. Robison, "Mentoring Women in the U.S. Army". Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, (26 April 1999).

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<sup>38</sup> Warren Wilhelm, "Learning from Past Leaders", The Leader of the Future, Josey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, CA, 1996, p223.

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